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Method for severing or removing a biological structure,  
especially bones

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In a method for severing or removing a biological structure, especially bones, by using a water-jet cutting system (R) from which a severing medium (4) under pressure is discharged, the severing medium (4) is to be discharged  
10 onto the biological structure in a pulsed manner.

Description

The invention relates to a method for severing or removing  
5 a biological structure, especially bones, by using a water-  
jet cutting system from which a severing medium under  
pressure is discharged, and to a cutting-nozzle element and  
a water-jet cutting system.

10 Such methods are known on the market and are in use in many  
different forms and designs.

In particular in medicine, it is known to sever, for  
example from outside, a bone by water-jet cutting. A  
15 disadvantage with this is that, in conventional water-jet  
cutting methods, the soft tissue, and not only the bone, is  
destroyed. The vascular system in the soft tissue at the  
bone is important in particular for the knitting of the  
bone or for the regeneration of the callus. It is therefore  
20 necessary during the water-jet removal or severing of  
biological substances, in particular of bones, to carry out  
the removal or severing of the bone as carefully as  
possible. In conventional water-jet cutting methods, the  
water is applied directly to the exposed bone via a cutting  
25 nozzle, in the course of which the vascular system in the  
bone is also damaged.

The object of the present invention is to provide a method  
and a water-jet cutting system having a cutting-nozzle  
30 element with which removal and/or severing of biological  
substances, in particular of bones, is possible in a simple  
and careful manner. The ease of manipulation of  
corresponding water-jet cutting systems having cutting-

nozzle elements is also to be considerably improved. Furthermore, it is the object of the present invention to shorten the operation times, in particular during the severing of bones, in which case high operation costs are 5 to be reduced as a result. In addition, an operation is to be carried out with substantially greater care and with a quicker recovery for the patient.

This object is achieved by the severing medium being 10 discharged onto the biological structure in a pulsed manner.

This ensures that, in particular, the soft tissue is moved back by a pulsed jet and then the severing medium strikes 15 the bone in order to partly remove the bone or to sever it. In this case, it may also be advantageous to insert a corresponding cutting nozzle for severing the bone into the marrow cavity of the bone and to provide the bone radially with a notch from inside.

20 For example, a radially arranged nozzle in a cutting-nozzle element is rotated in the marrow cavity of a tubular bone during the discharge of the severing medium. In the process, the bone can be severed at least partly from 25 inside. It may possibly also be sufficient to cut only one notch in the bone, so that it can subsequently be severed or pierced in a conventional manner from outside by a small blow. The outer periosteum is not destroyed in the process. Subsequent further treatment of the bone, for example 30 distraction, may then be carried out.

However, it is important that a pulsed water jet is discharged from a nozzle opening of a cutting-nozzle body

in a quite specific manner via this method, i.e. at a quite specific frequency and with a pressure change. This pulsation or pulsing is defined as a pressure change of a water jet which undergoes either only a slight pressure

5 change or a complete pressure change up to the absolute pressure drop. A biologically suitable inorganic and/or organic abrasive agent can be fed to the severing medium so that the material-removal capacity is considerably increased during the water-jet cutting. In this way, bones

10 can be severed with substantially lower pressures.

However, it is important that the pulsed discharge of the severing medium results in soft, elastic tissue being moved back upon impingement, whereas the bone tissue is severed

15 or removed when the severing medium impinges on said bone tissue.

Owing to the fact that the severing medium is discharged onto the biological structure in a pulsed manner, and

20 working pressures which would lead to destruction of the softer structures without pulsation are used, and these soft biological structures, on account of their higher elasticity compared with the surrounding harder biological structures, are subjected to lower mechanical loading

25 within the elastic range through suitable selection of the pulsation, the harder biological structures are severed due to the fact that the elasticity or fracture limit is exceeded.

30 If a cutting-nozzle element is inserted into the bone, a corresponding element, in particular a tube element or the like, is provided in order to draw the discharging medium out of the interior of the bone.

The pulsation is produced in the cutting nozzle essentially by varying cross sections in the cutting-nozzle element itself. This has the advantage that no inertia losses, for 5 example due to long, possibly elastic or resilient, tube lines, would weaken a changing pressure impulse.

So that a corresponding pulsation can be produced in the individual cutting-nozzle elements, a shut-off element sits 10 inside a cutting-nozzle body, this shut-off element influencing a medium, flowing along inside or outside the latter, by a rotational or translational reciprocating movement. A change of cross section is effected. In the process, a pressure change, in particular a pressure drop, 15 is effected. The pressure drop may even approach zero.

However, within the scope of the present invention, it is also intended that the pressure changes can take place within small and also large ranges. There are no limits to 20 the invention in this respect either.

In the preferred exemplary embodiment, a cutting-nozzle element which has at least one radial cutting-nozzle opening is formed. This cutting-nozzle element is inserted 25 into a bone, optionally held in a certain position via end spacers (not shown). By axial rotation of the cutting-nozzle body, with simultaneous discharge, a notch is produced in the bone, or the bone is even severed. So that the outflowing severing medium does not remain in the bone 30 interior space, the corresponding shut-off element, which is provided inside the cutting-nozzle body, is designed as a hollow shaft and can draw the liquid out of the interior space of the bone. So that other uses for severing or

removing bones are also possible, cutting-nozzle elements which have end nozzle openings are shown in other exemplary embodiments. These nozzle openings can also be opened and closed at a certain frequency, which is selectable, so that 5 a pulsed water jet can be discharged.

A corresponding water-jet cutting system is equipped with an interchangeable supply reservoir of varying size, in which case the supply reservoir can essentially be 10 connected to a pressure-generating device in an interchangeable manner. The pressure-generating device is preferably of electromechanical type and moves a linear drive onto a plunger element. As a result, a pressure which can be supplied to the cutting-nozzle element via a 15 connecting line is generated in a pressure space. The supply reservoirs are preferably of a size which can be selected so as to vary and contain the severing medium with, optionally, abrasive agents.

20 Only the cutting-nozzle element has to be cleaned after the operation. The supply reservoir is merely exchanged and can be recycled after use.

Furthermore, it is advantageous that such a water-jet 25 cutting system is exceptionally small and can be produced cost-effectively, since any desired supply reservoir can be mounted on the pressure-generating device.

Further advantages, features and details of the invention 30 follow from the description below of preferred exemplary embodiments and with reference to the drawing, in which:

Fig. 1 shows a schematic plan view of a water-jet cutting system according to the invention with interchangeable supply reservoir;

5 Fig. 2 shows a schematic partial longitudinal section through a cutting-nozzle element according to the invention;

10 Fig. 3 shows a partial longitudinal section through a further exemplary embodiment of a further cutting-nozzle element;

15 Fig. 4 shows a schematic partial longitudinal section through a further exemplary embodiment of the cutting-nozzle element.

According to Fig. 1, a water-jet cutting system R according to the invention for severing or removing a biological structure, in particular a human bone, has a pressure-generating device 1, adjoining which, preferably in an interchangeable manner, is a supply reservoir 2. The supply reservoir 2 has a pressure space 3 in which a severing medium 4 is introduced.

25 The severing medium 4 is preferably sterile and aseptic water, which is optionally enriched with abrasive agent 5. The abrasive agents 5 used may be inorganic or organic substances, such as, for example, sodium chlorides, biological amino acids, monosaccharides and disaccharides 30 and also sugars and alcohols. These abrasive agents 5 may also be supplied via injectors or the like (not shown here).

The supply reservoir 2 is closed by means of a plunger element 6, which can be actuated via a linear drive 7 of the pressure-generating device 1. The linear drive 7 is preferably an extendable mechanical spindle which can be 5 driven in particular as an electromechanically operated linear actuator of the pressure-generating device 1. Via gearing and suchlike drive elements (not shown here), the spindle can be extended and can exert a very high pressure on the plunger 6. In this case, the supply reservoir 2 is 10 supported on the pressure-generating device 1 via a quick-acting lock 8. The quick-acting lock 8 may be of the most varied type and have a threaded connection, a push-in connection, a bayonet lock or the like. There are no limits to the invention in this respect.

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However, it is important that, after the severing medium 4 has been completely discharged from the pressure space 3 by moving the plunger element 6 in the direction of an outlet valve 9, the medium 4 is fed completely to a cutting-nozzle element 5 via a connecting line 10. The severing medium 4 is discharged there radially or axially under very high pressure.

The outlet valve 9 is preferably designed as a nonreturn 25 valve. This nonreturn valve is connected to the connecting line 10 such that it can be released again, in which case consideration may also be given to producing a releasable connection between outlet valve 9 and pressure-generating device 1.

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The functioning of the present water-jet cutting system is as follows:

For the water-jet cutting, a severing medium under pressure, in particular in a pressurised manner is fed to the cutting-nozzle element S. To this end, the supply reservoir 2 is mounted on the pressure-generating device 1.

5 The severing medium 4 is poured in. The supply reservoir 2 is then pressurised by being acted upon by the plunger 6 via the linear drive 7, so that the severing medium 4 can be fed completely to the cutting-nozzle element S via the connecting line 10. So that there is no idle time during

10 the operation, when a supply reservoir is empty for example, a second pressure-generating device 1 having a second supply reservoir 2 may be provided, this second pressure-generating device 1 jointly feeding the severing medium 4 to the cutting-nozzle element S via a directional

15 control valve 11. While the one supply reservoir is being emptied during the operation, the other supply reservoir can be exchanged.

From the present inventive idea, different supply

20 reservoirs 2 which have capacities of different size for severing agents and which fit, for example, onto a single pressure-generating device 1 are also to be universally designed.

25 Shown in Fig. 2 is a possible cutting-nozzle element S<sub>1</sub> which has a cutting-nozzle body 12 which is designed to be hollow in the interior. In the preferred exemplary embodiment, at least one nozzle opening 13 is provided radially, through which the severing medium 4 flows out

30 under very high pressure for the severing, cutting or removal.

Provided inside the cutting-nozzle body 13 is a shut-off element 14 which is axially movable in a reciprocating manner, as shown in double arrow direction Y.

- 5 The shut-off element 14 forms a cone-like annular gap 16 via a cone 15 of the cutting-nozzle body 12, this cone 15 having a corresponding profile of the same kind.

Following the cone 15, the shut-off element 14 is of  
10 constricted design and forms an annular space 17 relative to the cutting-nozzle body 14, the severing medium 4 flowing outwards out of this annular space 17 through the radial nozzle openings 13. A shaft shoulder 18 of the shut-off element 14 adjoins the annular space 17 and is  
15 connected to the cutting-nozzle body 12 on the inside virtually free of play. Adjoining the shaft shoulder 18, which also serves to centre and axially guide the shut-off element 14, is an energy-storing element 19, which is supported at the end face on the shaft shoulder 18 and is  
20 supported on the other side at the end face on the cutting-nozzle body 12 on the inside. As a result, the shut-off element 14 is permanently deflected in an X-direction. The severing medium 4 flows through the annular gap 16 and is then discharged from the nozzle openings 13 under high  
25 pressure via the annular space 17.

However, it is important in the case of the present invention that a pulsating jet is produced from the nozzle openings 13 on account of a very small annular gap 16 in  
30 the region of the cone 15, the severing medium being greatly accelerated in this annular gap 16. This produces a negative pressure which further reduces the annular gap 16 until severing medium 4 no longer flows.

As a result, the shut-off element 14 is moved counter to the X-direction shown. The energy-storing element 19 is thereby loaded and applies pressure to the shut-off 5 element 14. The latter yields to the pressure of the energy-storing element 19 and causes the shut-off element 14 to move in the X-direction shown, so that the severing medium 4 can again flow out through the widened annular gap 16, the adjoining annular space 17 and thus 10 through the nozzle opening 13. This action repeats itself.

A pulsation can be controlled or set on the basis of pressures which can be set in a varying manner and on the basis of selectable energy-storing elements 19 and 15 different geometries of the annular gap 16. This pulsation serves essentially to remove or sever bones and tissue parts. It has proved to be especially favourable to use the pulsation.

20 Tissue structures which must not be damaged, such as the periosteum for example, are moved only within the elastic range by a pulsating jet. The pulsed jet then removes or severs the biological structure, in particular the bone. This ensures that the periosteum or other soft tissue is 25 attacked or damaged only slightly during the severing of bone.

A tube element 22, which is preferably of elastic type, adjoins the shut-off element 14. It permits an axial 30 movement of the shut-off element 14 in the Y-direction shown. At the same time, it serves to draw off severing medium 4 which is located in the bone interior when the

cutting-nozzle element  $S_1$  is inserted into a bone interior space.

Shown in a further exemplary embodiment of the present 5 invention according to Fig. 3 is a cutting-nozzle element  $S_2$  in which the nozzle opening 13 is provided axially at the end face in the cutting-nozzle body 12.

A shut-off element 14 is inserted as hollow shaft inside 10 the cutting-nozzle body 12 of hollow design and is rotatable about an axis 20 in the Z-direction shown.

A discharge opening 21 is provided at the end face in the shut-off element 14 of hollow design, which fits precisely 15 into the cutting-nozzle body 12, the discharge opening 21 coinciding with the nozzle opening 13 in a certain position. However, the provision of a multiplicity of discharge openings 21 at the end face is also intended to be within the scope of the present invention, so that, when 20 the shut-off element 14 is rotated, the severing medium 4, which is introduced inside the shut-off element 14 under high pressure, discharges outwards in a pulsating manner via the discharge opening 21 and when the latter coincides with the nozzle opening 13. The pulsation or the cyclical 25 discharge of severing medium 4 from the nozzle opening 13 can be influenced by the number of corresponding discharge openings 21 or by the rotational speed of the shut-off element 14 about an axis 20. The rotation may be effected in any desired manner, mechanically, electromechanically or 30 some other way.

Shown in the last exemplary embodiment of the present invention according to Fig. 4 is a cutting-nozzle element  $S_3$

in which the cutting-nozzle body 12 is likewise designed to be hollow and has a nozzle opening 13 at the end face in the region of an axis 20.

- 5 The shut-off element 14 sits in an axially movable manner inside the cutting-nozzle body 12 and is of conical design and engages in a correspondingly formed cone of the cutting-nozzle body 12. The severing medium 4 flows between shut-off element 14 and the interior space of the cutting-nozzle body 12 when the annular gap 16 is open. The annular gap 16 is opened and closed by a translational axial movement of the shut-off element 14 in double arrow direction Y shown. This movement may be produced, for example, mechanically, electromechanically or even by a
- 10 piezoelectric element. Many different possibilities which are intended to fall within the scope of the invention are conceivable here.
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## List of reference numerals

- 1 Pressure-generating device
- 2 Supply reservoir
- 5 3 Pressure space
- 4 Severing medium
- 5 Abrasive agent
- 6 Plunger element
- 7 Linear drive
- 10 8 Quick-acting lock
- 9 Outlet valve
- 10 Connecting line
- 11 Directional control valve
- 12 Cutting-nozzle body
- 15 13 Nozzle opening
- 14 Shut-off element
- 15 Cone
- 16 Annular gap
- 17 Annular space
- 20 18 Shaft shoulder
- 19 Energy-storing element
- 20 Axis
- 21 Discharge opening
- 22 Tube element
- 25 R Water-jet cutting system
- S Cutting-nozzle element
- S<sub>1</sub> Cutting-nozzle element
- S<sub>2</sub> Cutting-nozzle element
- S<sub>3</sub> Cutting-nozzle element
- 30 X Direction
- Y Double arrow direction

## Claims

1. Method for severing or removing a biological structure, especially bones, by using a water-jet cutting system (R) from which a severing medium (4) under pressure is discharged, characterised in that the severing medium (4) is discharged onto the biological structure in a pulsed manner.
- 10 2. Method for severing or removing a biological structure, especially bones, by using a water-jet cutting system (R) from which a severing medium (4) under pressure is discharged, characterised in that a bone wall is impinged by the severing medium (4) at least partly from inside.
- 15 3. Method according to Claim 2, characterised in that the bone wall is impinged by a pulsating severing medium.
4. Method according to at least one of Claims 1 to 3, characterised in that an organic and/or inorganic abrasive agent (5) is fed to the severing medium (4).
- 20 5. Method according to at least one of Claims 1 to 4, characterised in that the pulsation of the severing medium (4) is produced immediately before discharge in a cutting-nozzle element (S, S<sub>1</sub> to S<sub>4</sub>).
- 25 6. Method according to at least one of Claims 1 to 5, characterised in that the pulsation is produced by frequently occurring, optionally alternating, pressure change of the severing medium (4) to be discharged.

7. Method according to at least one of Claims 1 to 6, characterised in that the pulsation in the cutting-nozzle element (S, S<sub>1</sub> to S<sub>4</sub>) is produced mechanically, pneumatically, electromagnetically by the piezoelectric 5 effect or electromechanically, a frequency of the pressure change being set as desired.

8. Method according to at least one of Claims 1 to 7, characterised in that the pulsation is produced by 10 utilising the effect of the increase in the flow rate of the severing medium in a gap or annular gap (16) with simultaneous reduction of the pressure and of the gap by a movable shut-off part (14) which is moved by the negative pressure and an energy-storing element which, when the gap 15 is zero and the flow is zero, opens the gap again.

9. Water-jet cutting system for severing or removing a biological structure, especially bones, having a pressure-generating device (1), to which at least one cutting-nozzle 20 element (S, S<sub>1</sub> to S<sub>4</sub>) can be connected, characterised in that a supply reservoir (2) with at least one introduced severing medium (4) is interchangeably assigned to the pressure-generating device (1).

25 10. Water-jet cutting system according to Claim 9, characterised in that at least one cutting-nozzle element (S, S<sub>1</sub> to S<sub>4</sub>) can be connected to the supply reservoir (2), in particular to a pressure space (3).

30 11. Water-jet cutting system according to Claim 9 or 10, characterised in that the pressure-generating device (1) has a linear drive (7), in particular an electromechanically operated linear actuator which is

pressurised by a plunger element (6) of the supply reservoir (2).

12. Water-jet cutting system according to at least one of  
5 Claims 9 to 11, characterised in that the supply reservoir (2) is connected, such that it can be released again, to the pressure-generating device (1) via at least one quick-acting lock (8), optionally as a thread or as a bayonet lock.

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13. Water-jet cutting system according to at least one of Claims 9 to 12, characterised in that at least two pressure-generating devices (1) with interchangeable supply reservoirs (2) can be connected to a cutting-nozzle element 15 (S, S<sub>1</sub> to S<sub>3</sub>), either of the pressure-generating devices (1) delivering the severing medium (4) to the cutting-nozzle element (S, S<sub>1</sub> to S<sub>3</sub>).

14. Cutting-nozzle element for severing or removing a  
20 biological structure, especially bones, to which element a severing medium (4) under pressure can be fed, characterised in that at least one nozzle opening (13) is provided at the end face or radially in a cutting-nozzle body (12).

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15. Cutting-nozzle element according to Claim 14, characterised in that at least one shut-off element (14) for the pulsed closing of the nozzle opening (13) is assigned to the cutting-nozzle body (12).

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16. Cutting-nozzle element according to Claim 15, characterised in that the shut-off element (14) is arranged inside the nozzle body (12).

17. Cutting-nozzle element according to Claim 15 or 16, characterised in that the shut-off element (14) is arranged inside the nozzle body (12) in a translationally and/or 5 rotationally movable, in particular reciprocatingly movable, manner.
18. Cutting-nozzle element according to Claim 17, characterised in that the nozzle opening (13) can be closed 10 at intervals of time in a pulsed manner by the translational and/or rotational movement of the shut-off element (14).
19. Cutting-nozzle element according to at least one of 15 Claims 15 to 18, characterised in that a gap or cone-like annular gap (16), through which the severing medium (4) flows, is formed in-between the cutting-nozzle body (12) and shut-off element (14).
20. Cutting-nozzle element according to at least one of Claims 15 to 19, characterised in that the shut-off element (14) is designed in the manner of a hollow shaft and projects out of the end face of the cutting-nozzle body (12) in order to draw off severing medium and 25 biological substances.
21. Cutting-nozzle element according to at least one of Claims 15 to 20, characterised in that the shut-off element (14) is provided with a shaft shoulder (18) which 30 closes the nozzle opening (13) and which is axially pressurised by means of an energy-storing element (19).

22. Cutting-nozzle element according to at least one of Claims 15 to 21, characterised in that, for the drawing-off, an elastic tube element (22) adjoins the shut-off element (14) and compensates for a translational and/or 5 rotational movement of the shut-off element (14).

23. Cutting-nozzle element according to at least one of Claims 15 to 22, characterised in that a rotatable shut-off element (14) is inserted in the cutting-nozzle body (12).

10 24. Cutting-nozzle element according to Claim 23, characterised in that the shut-off element (14) is fed a severing medium (4) which has at least one radial or axial discharge opening (21) which is movable by rotation and/or 15 translation onto a coinciding nozzle opening (13) of the cutting-nozzle body (12).

25. Use of components of the common-rail injection technique, in particular for pressure generation, valve 20 engineering and electronic control for a water-jet cutting system and/or a cutting-nozzle element.

Translator's notes

The following presumed errors have been corrected in the translation

(column and line number refer to the German original)

column 4, line 49: 16 --->14

column 8, line 35: 13 ---> 21